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PSC INVITES PUBLIC COMMENT ON PROPOSED EXTENDED AREA PHONE SERVICE

Public Service Commissioner Bob Anderson invites Helena, Townsend, Boulder and Wolf Creek residents to attend public hearings this month on US West Communications' proposals for telephone extended area service between the four towns. Extended area service expands local calling areas so that customers' phone calls within an EAS region will be local, not long-distance. However, local phone rates in an EAS region must increase to recover EAS costs. US West has proposed three rate alternatives under which EAS, if approved by the PSC, could be provided to include Helena, Townsend, Boulder and Wolf Creek in one local calling area.

The hearings will be held at the following times and locations:

Townsend - Tuesday, October 29, at 7 p.m., Townsend Community Library's Community Room,
201 North Spruce.

Boulder - Wednesday, October 30, at 7 p.m., Boulder City Hall, 304 North Main.

Helena - Thursday, October 31, at 7 p.m., PSC's Bollinger Room, 1701 Prospect Ave.

US West has proposed three rate options for EAS in the Helena region. If the PSC approves EAS, it must choose one of the options, or develop an alternative.

Option 1 - Increase local phone rates by \$2.62 per month in all exchanges in the state where EAS is implemented.

Option 2 - Increase local rates based on the total number of lines in the EAS region. Generally, the more lines in a region, the greater the rate increase. Under this option, Helena, Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek customers' local phone bills would increase by \$2.10 per month.

Option 3 - Increase local rates in individual exchanges based on the number of additional lines EAS makes available for local calling from those exchanges. Under the four alternatives of this option, the rate increase for Helena customers would be smaller than the rate increases for Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek customers. The four alternatives are:

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- a) a monthly increase of \$2.36 for Helena customers and \$4 for Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek;
- b) a monthly increase of \$2 for Helena customers and \$5.65 for Boulder, Townsend and Wolf Creek;
- c) a monthly increase of \$1.50 for Helena customers and \$7.93 for Boulder, Townsend and

Wolf Creek;
d) a monthly increase of \$1 for Helena customers and \$10.19 for
Boulder, Townsend and Wolf
Creek.

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